DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 535 CS 511 995

TITLE	Arabic Poetry: Guzzle a Ghazal! [Lesson Plan].
SPONS AGENCY	Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC.; MCI WorldCom, Arlington, VA.; National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	8p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_index.asp.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Arabic; Class Activities; Cultural Context; Curriculum Enrichment; High Schools; *Language Arts; Learning Activities; Lesson Plans; Oral Tradition; *Poetry; *Rhyme; Skill Development; Student Educational Objectives; Units of Study
IDENTIFIERS	Poetic Forms; Standards for the English Language Arts

ABSTRACT

The Bedouins of ancient Arabia and Persia made poetry a conversational art form, and several poetic forms developed from the participatory nature of tribal poetry. Today in most Arab cultures, people may still experience public storytelling and spontaneous poetry challenges in the streets. The art of turning a rhyme into sly verbal sparring is considered a mark of intelligence and a badge of honor. The "ghazal" is an intricate pre-Islamic poetic form that is thought to have developed through the practice of poetic challenges. It is a series of couplets, called "shers," no more than a dozen or so, which are related, but not connecting in a narrative pattern. The first couplet, or "matia," has a rhyme pattern, "kaafiyaa," preceding a single word or short phrase, refrain, "radif," at the end of each line. Thereafter, every couplet shows a pattern wherein the first line does not rhyme, but the second line ends in the "kaafiyaa" and the "radif." Finally, the last couplet, the "maqta," contains the "takhallis," the poet's name or pen-name. This lesson plan for a unit on Arabic poetry intended for high school students: cites subject areas, time required, and skills developed; provides an introduction; poses guiding questions; presents learning objectives; gives tips for teacher preparing to teach the lesson; suggests (and delineates) three classroom activities; offers suggestions for extending the lesson; lists Web resources; and addresses standards alignment. (NKA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 476 535

Arabic Poetry: Guzzle a Ghazal!
[EDsitement Lesson Plan].

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS 511 995

Arabic Poetry: Guzzle a Ghazal!

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES
EDSITEment marcopolo

GRADES 9–12

Introduction

The Bedouins of ancient Arabia and Persia made poetry a conversational art form. Several poetic forms developed from the participatory nature of tribal poetry. Today in most Arabic cultures, you may still experience public storytelling and spontaneous poetry challenges in the streets. The art of turning a rhyme into sly verbal sparring is considered a mark of intelligence and a badge of honor.

The *ghazal* (pronounced "guzzle") is an intricate pre-Islamic poetic form that is thought to have developed through the practice of poetic challenges. It is a series of couplets, called *shers*, no more than a dozen or so, which are related, but not connecting in a narrative pattern. The first couplet, or *matla*, has a rhyme pattern, *kaafiyaa*, preceding a single word or short phrase refrain, *radif*, at the end of each line. Thereafter, every couplet shows a pattern wherein the first line doesn't rhyme, but the second line ends in the *kaafiyaa* and the *radif*. Finally, the last couplet, the *maqta*, contains the *takhallis*, the poet's name or pen-name.

This complex structure requires careful insights and an understanding of irony and word-play. It dates to pre-Islamic times, yet remains current, forming the lyrical base of much popular music in India, Iraq, and Iran. Students will enjoy discovering the rules of *ghazal* writing through observation and inference.

Southern Arabia
Alabaster (gypsum); H. 9.4 in. (24 cm)
Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Spear, Jr. Gift, 1982 (1982.317.1)
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Guiding Questions

What is a *ghazal*, how did it evolve, and why has it remained a popular form of Arabic poetry until today? What elements and structures does this pre-Islamic poetic form contain? How does the rhyming pattern of the *ghazal* compare to that of common forms of poetry in English?

Learning Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- experience an Arabic poetic form
- identify the elements *Shayar, sher, beher, matla, radif, kaafiyaa, takhallis*, and *maqta* associated with a *ghazal*
- recognize the structure of a *ghazal* as a series of discrete couplets using rhyme and refrain in the second line of each couplet, and in which the author makes a self-reference in the final couplet, by observing similarities among three sample *ghazals*
- speculate about the origin of the form and suggest reasons for the structure
- appreciate the craft of incorporating word-play in writing a *ghazal* in order to retain interest in the refrain or to change the meaning of the refrain in context

Preparing to teach this Lesson

Review some general information on poetic form:

Subject Areas

Foreign Language

Other

Literature and Language Arts

Poetry

World

Time Required

Lesson 1: One twenty-minute class period
Lesson 2: One forty-minute class period
Lesson 3: One forty-minute class period

Skills

Reading and appreciating poetry
Close reading of texts
Analyzing patterns
Drawing inferences
Recognizing poetic form and devices of rhyme, couplet, and structure

- Some types of poems that have rules determining the way they must be written are: haiku, sonnets, couplets, cinquains, ode, and limerick
- Some of the rules that determine the form of the poem are: number of lines, rhyme scheme, number of syllables, meter, and content.
- Some kinds of rhymes in poetry are: end rhyme, internal rhyme, hard and soft rhyme, and near or slant rhyme.
- Rhyme schemes are defined by abba, aabb, etc.
- A repeated line, phrase, or word at the end of a stanza is called a refrain.

To become familiar with the terms and the form of a *ghazal*, read "What is a *Ghazal*?", an essay by Abhay Avachat, available through the EDSITEment-reviewed resource Academy of American Poets.

American poet Agha Shahid Ali also explains the *ghazal* succinctly as follows:

> A poem of five to fifteen couplets. The name rhymes with "guzzle."
>
> No enjambment between couplets. Think of each couplet as a separate poem, in which the first line serves the function of the octave of a Petrarchan sonnet and the second line the sestet-that is, there must be a turn, or *volta*, between lines 1 and 2 of each couplet. Thus, certain kinds of enjambments would not work even WITHIN the couplets, the kind that would lead to a caesura in line 2. One must have a sense that line 2 is amplifying line 1, turning things around, surprising us.
>
> Once again, ABSOLUTELY no enjambment between couplets-each couplet must be like a precious stone that can shine even when plucked from the necklace though it certainly has greater luster in its setting.
>
> What links these couplets is a strict formal scheme. (I am speaking of the canonical form of the *ghazal*, shaped by the Persians in, I believe, the twelfth century.) This is how it works: The entire *ghazal* employs the same rhyme and refrain. The rhyme must always immediately precede the refrain. If the rhyme is merely buried somewhere in the line, that will have its charm, of course, but it would not lead to the wonderful pleasure of IMMEDIATE recognition which is central to the *ghazal*, The refrain may be a word or phrase.
>
> Each line must be of the same length (inclusive of the rhyme and refrain). In Urdu and Persian, all the lines are usually in the same meter and have the same metrical length. So establish some system-metrical or syllabic-for maintaining consistency in line lengths.
>
> The last couplet may be (and usually is) a signature couplet in which the poet may invoke his/her name in the first, second, or third person.
>
> The scheme of rhyme and refrain occurs in BOTH lines of the first couplet (that is how one learns what the scheme is), and then in only the second line of every succeeding couplet (that is, the first line of every succeeding couplet has no restrictions other than to maintain the syllabic or metrical length.
>
> There is an epigrammatic terseness in the *ghazal*, but with immense lyricism, evocation, sorrow, heartbreak, wit. What defines the *ghazal* is a constant longing.
>
> This is what a *ghazal* looks like:
>
> **Couplet one:**

_____rhyme A + refrain

_____rhyme A + refrain

Couplet Two, Three, & so on:

_____

_____rhyme A + refrain

Here are some opening and concluding couplets of mine:

Example A:

I say That, after all, is the trick of it all

When suddenly you say "Arabic of it all."

For Shahid too the night went quickly as it came.

After that, O Friend, came the music of it all.

Example B:

What will suffice for a true love knot? Even the rain?

But he has bought grief's lottery, bought even the rain.

They've found the knife that killed you, but whose prints are these?

No one has such small hands, Shahid, not even the rain.

Example C:

Suspended in the garden, Time, bit by bit, shines-

As you lean over this page, late and alone, it shines.

Mark how Shahid returns your very words to you.

It's when the heart, still unbriefed, but briefly literature, shines.

Example D:

Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell tonight

Before you agonize him in farewell tonight?

And I, Shahid, only ám escaped to tell thee-

God sobs in my arms. Call me Ishmael tonight.

Select the following three sample *ghazals*, available through the EDSITEment-reviewed resource Academy of American Poets from a search on *ghazal*:

1. *Ghazal of the Better-Unbegun* by Heather McHugh (to access this poem, search for the title on Find a Poem)
2. Ghazal: for Donald [sic] Hall (The title is actually "Ghazal" for Daniel Hall)
3. Ghazal

Suggested Activities

1: Recipe for Rhyme

2: Defining the *Ghazal*

3: Group *Ghazal*!

1: Recipe for Rhyme

Ask students: Does COW rhyme with FEW or BURROW? Does CAKE rhyme with ATTACK? Yet in Arabic poetry, these might be acceptable rhymes. Explain that Arabic poetry uses a different form of rhyme than English poetry. Arabic poets sometimes need only end in the same syllable or even letter to call it rhyme. Distribute the first *ghazal*. Ask students to read aloud, taking turns for each couplet, so that the discreteness of the *shers* is emphasized through voice, while the *radif* is made obvious because each speaker ends in the same word. Have students identify the patterns they observe and devise a rhyme scheme formula through inference. They should arrive at the formula defined by Ali:

Couplet one:

_____rhyme A + refrain

_____rhyme A + refrain

Couplet Two, Three, & so on:

_____

_____rhyme A + refrain

Distribute the other two *ghazals* and ask them to determine whether the authors have observed the basic "rhyming rules" of the *ghazal*.

2: Defining the *Ghazal*

After having completed Lesson One, ask students to observe similarities among the three *ghazals*; they should conclude that the first couplet always repeats the rhyme and refrain, and the last couplet always contains the poet's name. Tell them the poet is referred to as the *Shayar*, the equivalent of the speaker. Have them speculate as to why this structure was established. After students finish sharing responses, explain if necessary that ancient Arabic poetry was often a public event and group participation was encouraged. One theory states that the opening couplet repeats the rhyme and refrain so that everyone participating hears it twice and is certain of it; the final stanza belongs to the poet who initiated the *ghazal*, so he claims credit

after so many have participated by including his name.

Next, encourage students to discuss the relationship of the couplets within a *ghazal*. They should conclude that the couplets do not link, but are related only by the pattern of rhyme and refrain, as well as a theme. Advanced students may notice also that there is no enjambment between lines, and that the second line seems to respond to the first line.

Have the students combine their learnings to arrive at a final, single-sentence definition of the *ghazal* as a series of independent couplets, of which the first couplet defines the rhyme pattern and refrain in both lines, remaining couplets use the same rhyme and refrain in the second line, and the last couplet mentions the author's name.

Note: this activity can be enriched for World Literature classes by teaching them the Arabic terms and having them use these terms in their discussion.

3: Group *Ghazal*!

In groups of four, students compose a *ghazal* in a round-robin activity for a total of thirteen *shers*, beginning and ending with the same *Shayar*, or poet. The group should decide on the *radif*, but the *Shayar* can choose the *kaafiyaa*. Allow thirty minutes for composition; then have groups read their *ghazal* round robin.

Extending this Lesson

1. Ask students to research other Arabic forms of poetry such as the *qasida* or the *rithá'*, or famous Arabic poets and their influence on Arabic literature.
2. Have students locate more works by Agha Shahid Ali and present a report on his life and his poetry.
3. Have students do a Google search on *ghazal* to find other examples of *ghazals*.
4. Ask students to compose their own *ghazal* to read aloud or present on a poster for the class.

Selected EDSITEment Websites:

Academy of American Poetshttp://www.poets.org

- Definition of a Ghazalhttp://www.cs.wisc.edu/~navin/india/songs/ghalib/ghazal.def.html.
- "Ghazal of the Better-Unbegun" by Heather McHugh (search on Find a Poem http://www.poets.org/poems/search.cfm)
- "Ghazal: for Donald [sic] Hall" http://bostonreview.mit.edu/BR24.2/ali.html
- "Ghazal" http://nycbigcitylit.com/sep2001/contents/PoetryFeature.html#Ghazal

---

Other Information

Standards Alignment

1. ACTFL-1.1

   Engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions more

2. NCTE/IRA-1

   Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works. more

3. NCTE/IRA-11

   Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

4. NCTE/IRA-12

   Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). more

5. NCTE/IRA-2

   Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. more

6. NCTE/IRA-3

   Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. more

7. NCTE/IRA-4

   Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. more

8. NCTE/IRA-5

   Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. more

9. NCTE/IRA-6

   Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts. more

10. NCTE/IRA-7

    Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. more

11. NCTE/IRA-8

    Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. more

12. NCTE/IRA-9

    Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
X	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").